EEC Proposal for Reduction in Levy on Rice

1883. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the European Economic Community proposes to reduce import levy on Indian basmati rice much to the advantage of Pakistani exporters of rice;

(b) if so, what are the reasons therefor; and

(c) what is its likely impact on the exports of Indian basmati rice and what is Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BRAHM DUTT): (a) to (c) A proposal to reduce the existing levy on import of basmati rice by 50 per cent for a quantity of 15,000 tonnes per annum is understood to be under consideration of the European Economic Community (EEC). The proposal covers all imports of basmati rice regardless of the country of origin. The proposed reduction will improve the competitiveness of basmati rice in the Community market. Since our current interest is more in the export of husked basmati rice, we have requested for deeper reduction of levy in respect of husked basmati rice. We have also sought abolition of the quantity to which the reduced levy will apply.

Establishment of Zone of Peace in Indian Ocean

1884. SHRI MURLIDHAR CHANDRAKANT BHANDARE:
SHRI MAHENDRA PRASAD:
SHRI DHULESHWAR MEENA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that China has also lately stressed the need for establishment of a zone of Peace in Indian Ocean and Mediterranean Sea; and

(b) if so, whether in the light thereof the possibilities of establishment of a zone of Peace in the Indian Ocean have improved; if so, what is Government's assessment in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI K. K. NARAYANAN): (a) People's Republic of China has voted in favour of Resolution 28|32 (1971) on the establishment of a zone of Peace in the Indian Ocean. China has reiterated its position in some of the recent statements made by the Chinese leaders and representatives.

(b) However, due to the attitude of some Western countries in the *Ad-Hoc* Committee, there has been no forward movement. These countries are insisting on bringing in issues extraneous to the main focus of the Conference, *i.e.* militarisation and presence of great powers in Indian Ocean areas. These and other related differences have been used as a justification for repeated postponement of the Conference. Under these circumstances, the possibility of holding the Conference at an early date, but not later than 1988, as called for in Resolution 40|153 appears remote.

Indian Employed in Qatar

1885. SHRI V. GOPALSAMY:
SHRI K. GOPALAN:

Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) how many expatriate Indian nationals are presently employed in Qatar;

(b) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item captioned "Qatarisation may render 13000 expatriates jobless" which appeared in the 'Indian Express' of the 7th July, 1986; and